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Honorable William Casey
Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Bill:

As I mentioned Friday night, and as you agreed, it is important that we never refer to Andropov as the "Soviet President." This was a practice that crept into Carter Administration verbiage, and was typical of their fawning posture.

The attached page makes all the arguments in detail.

Sincerely,

Elliott Abrams
Bureau of Human Rights and
Humanitarian Affairs

EA:ks
enclosure: as stated

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WHY WE SHOULDN'T CALL ANDROPOV "PRESIDENT":

- It's not the right translation. There is a Russian word "President," which means president and is used for President Reagan and all other presidents. Andropov was just made "Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet" -- the word here is predsedatel', the standard word for chairman.
- It distorts the nature of the Soviet system; it is not an important office. It was occupied by such forgettable politicians as Kalinin, Shvernik, Voroshilov, and Podgorny. Lenin, Stalin, Malenkov and Khrushchev were never Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Brezhnev only became Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet because he was not strong enough to get the Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers.

The significant fact about the structure of the Soviet government continues to be the division into Party and State. Andropov heads the former as General Secretary. The State structure is now headed by Andropov's opponents. If we begin calling him President, we cover over this significant fact. And we give the Supreme Soviet -- a ceremonial body no more important than the Privy Council or the House of Lords in Britain -- an importance it does not really possess.

- It makes the Soviet system look familiar and "American." Was Andropov elected? In fact, President Carter personally ordered that Brezhnev be addressed as President, against the advice of Soviet specialists in the government. This was part of a distressing tendency to fawn on Soviet leaders which should not be repeated in the Reagan Administration.
- It serves the purpose of using our statements to strengthen Andropov against Chernenko. We have made no decision that this is in our interest; it is a complicated issue, since Andropov (backed by the KGB and military) appears to take a tougher line toward us than Chernenko.
- It gives the impression the succession struggle is over. It isn't until Andropov becomes Chairman of the Council of Ministers and purges Chernenko from the Politburo.

Conclusion: For ceremonial purposes, we can congratulate Andropov on his selection as what he was selected as: Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Normally, we should call him General Secretary, because this is the most important title he holds.